

# Remedial courses often needed at KSU

## University has highest proportion of incoming students who must review

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Kentucky State University appears to have the highest proportion of students who require remedial courses in the state.

About 85 percent of its population must take English, math or reading classes, or all three, that review basic concepts before they can begin taking college-level courses. The additional classes can be costly and do not count for college credit.

However, looks can be deceiving, said Lucian Yates III, chairman of the KSU School of Education. The percentage is so high because KSU has the smallest admission class of any of the public universities.

"One or two people can throw that number off," Yates said.

The Council on Postsecondary Education Developmental Education Task Force met Tuesday to discuss how to assist students who were under-prepared for college.

According to a 2001 Kentucky policy, students receiving a 17 or below on the ACT in math, English or reading now must be placed in remedial programs or receive supplemental help in those areas.

A statewide study following the freshman class of 2002 through its first two years found that of the 26,646 students entering school in 2002, about 54 percent were under-prepared for college-level study in at least one subject area. Non-traditional and minority students were less prepared for college-level study than their peers.

As a result, under-prepared students were twice as likely to drop out as their prepared counterparts - 39 percent compared to 20 percent - and only half of those under-prepared in all three subjects returned for a second year.

While KSU was mentioned as the col-

lege with the highest remedial rate, it was also cited as a leader in offering remedial programs to college students.

KSU began Summer Bridge in the summer of 2005, said Roosevelt Shelton, assistant provost for the Office of Enrollment and Management. It was a trial program where the university chose 16 students requiring remedial courses and enrolled them in a six-week summer school course.

"The goal was to ease the transition from high school to college and address developmental needs," Shelton said. "The belief was that by addressing these needs early, we would increase their persistence and retention."

It worked, Shelton said. The retention rate for those students was 100 percent. All finished their freshman year, re-enrolled in college for a second year and used university support services such as tutors and counselors throughout their first year.

So this summer, the university enrolled 42 students who required remediation in two or more subject areas and who were from lower-income families, Shelton said.

The bridge program organizers also changed the format, Shelton said. All of the students had to take their two non-credit remedial courses and a credit-bearing course.

The program was structured so that the students all had scheduled class time and scheduled academic support service time, working with tutors, counselor and staff in the Academic Center for Excellence and First Year Experience help centers, Shelton said.

By familiarizing the students with all of the services available to help them, they are more likely to use those services throughout the school year, Shelton said.

"We are teaching them how to learn," Shelton said. "By teaching them how to access assistance when they need it, we

believe we are setting them on the road to success."

One key component of the bridge program is grouping the students in learning communities, Shelton said. The students "live, eat, sleep, work, play, breathe and cry together."

"By living and learning together, the learning is maximized," Shelton said. "They are learning from their peers."

In the trial bridge program, the students were in learning communities for the summer and the fall semester and then monitored for two additional semesters, Shelton said. In this year's follow-up phase, the 42 students will stay in learning communities and be monitored for a total of five semesters.

Then, the university will collect and analyze results of the program to see if the new approach worked, Shelton said.

Also new this year is requiring all freshmen to take the UNV 101 course, said Juanita Fleming, provost and vice president for academic affairs.

Previously the course was only for remedial students. It introduces them to the university, teaches them study and life skills as well as shows them campus resources and requires them to complete community service.

The Faculty Senate last year said it was an important course for all freshmen, one that would "lay the foundation for their college career," Fleming said.

"The whole idea is helping students to be successful," Fleming said. "This course will help retain students because it helps them be successful. Retaining students is important for us as a university because if we want to graduate all of the students we bring in, we have to do everything we can to retain them."

Offering remedial assistance and helping more college students to stay in school and graduate is important because it means "better lives for Kentucky people," said Mark Wattier, chairman of the

task force.

"We got into this business to help people reach their potential," Wattier said. "When they are not reaching their potential, we are not reaching our potential as educators."

KSU offers so many retention programs because it was founded as an open admissions university, providing anyone access to a college education, Yates said. So, the university takes students as they are.

"You work with the students that you get," Yates said. "We are not trying to put the blame on anyone (such as high schools for not preparing students). We do what we can to help those students and ultimately improve the education (level) in the state of Kentucky."

However, Rep. Harry Moberly Jr., D-Richmond, called the state's efforts to help students requiring remediation "piecemeal."

"The council (on postsecondary education) has not adopted a comprehensive plan," Moberly said.

He said the regional stewardship initiatives, where colleges form advisory councils with community members and business leaders to address issues and concerns in their communities, will help to address the under-prepared students.

The task force will develop a comprehensive plan to address student needs including various strategies to help the various types of students requiring remediation, said James Applegate, council vice president of academic affairs. He said all of the students coming to college needing additional help are not recent graduates. Many are adults returning to school attending part-time.

The task force will meet at least three more times to continue exploring remediation for under-preparedness in Kentucky college students.